

"מושיב יחידים ביתה במאזנים לעלות המה מהבל אחד" (תהילים סב:)

Speaking briefly on the permissibility of betrothing a woman on *Hol Hamoed*, the Talmud speaks volumes on the inter-relationship between God and the universe, God's influence on the world and the Universal Laws by which God Himself abides.

תמן הוא אמר "מושיב יחידים ביתה במאזנים לעלות המה מהבל אחד" (תהילים סב:י) והכא הוא אמר הכין? שלא יקדמנו אחר בתפילה. אפילו כן לא קיימה (ביצה ה:ב כ, ב)

There he says "" but here he says so?(=betrothing is permissible)? So that someone does not usurp him with prayer. Even so it (=marriage) will not last.

Samuel believes that marriage is pre-ordained by God Who decides who will be paired with whom. At the same time Samuel permits one to betroth a woman on *Hol Hamoed* lest another man beat him to her and marry her first. The contradiction in these two statements is apparent. If marriage is pre-ordained there should not be any fear of usurpation. One way or another the couple will be united.

The belief upon which the contradiction is predicated, that God's decree cannot be abrogated even by creating the situation is now revised. A decree cannot be abrogated by a person's physical efforts, but it can be abrogated by invoking the universal power of prayer.

Marriage with the usurper will not last, their union is destined to dissolve and the originally ordained union will materialize. According to this, God's decrees it seems cannot be abrogated but they can be temporarily displaced.

Two aspects of ordination come to the fore: In the order of the universe and in the grand scheme of things. Originally the two are combined but the power of Prayer can separate them.

The mechanism by which prayer affects God's decrees is not completely unambiguous. Does it operate by means of laws built into the Universe? Or does it operate by means of God's discretionary and personal intervention into the workings of the Universe? The first possibility seems most logical. If displacing the decree is destined to dissolution what sense is there to God involving Himself.

The Babylonian Talmud, though in a completely different tractate has a similar passage so similar in fact that we are dealing with an ancient sugya that made it into both Talmuds and may have theological and ideological underpinnings which differ from other sugyoth.

ומי אמר שמואל שמא יקדמנו אחר? והאמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל בכל יום ויום בת קול יוצאת ואומרת בת פלוני לפלוני שדה פלוני לפלוני?

אלא שמא יקדמנו אחר ברחמים]כי הא דרבא שמעיה ליהווא גברא דבעי רחמי ואמר תזדמן לי פלניתא א"ל לא תיבעי רחמי הכי אי חזיא לך לא אזלא מינך ואי לא כפרת בה! בתר הכי שמעיה דקאמר או איהו לימות מקמה או איהי תמות מקמיה א"ל לאו אמינא לך לא תיבעי עלה?] (מועד קטן יח:)

“Mercy” in the Babylonian Talmud seems to be an explanation of “Prayer” or at least a translation of the word into more familiar terms. The Babylonian passage is about “Begging” and playing on God’s *midath ha-rahamim*, an appeal to God’s emotional and personal constituent.

The Talmud Bavli unlike the Talmud Yerushalmi appears to perceive the changing of the decree as personal intervention of God and not by means of cosmic laws which God set into motion.

Rava’s warning is not to invoke pity and not interfere in God’s plan! While in the Talmud Yerushalmi assumes the dissolution of the marriage, the Talmud Bavli does not take it that far; only that the marriage will become incredibly unbearable. This point of difference reflects the difference in the perception of the two Talmudim.